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SUBJECT: FINLAND: FOREIGN MINISTER ON UN REFORM, CAMPAIGN  
FOR UNSC SEAT 2013-14

Classified By: CDA Michael A. Butler for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Finnish Foreign Minister Stubb kicked off Finland's 2013-14 Security Council Seat campaign at a March 17 seminar entitled "The Role of Small States in the United Nations Security Council"(UNSC). Stubb defined Finland as a small state with proven leadership experience that would help drive UN reform forward. Stubb called the UN a forum to provides world leadership and establish consensus around major issues while allowing other organizations, largely regional ones, to carry much of the load. Stubb expressed concern that ad hoc fora such as "G-meetings" would marginalize the UN, especially in times of crisis. He called for broad reform of the UNSC, including elimination of the veto in favor of weighted consensus and rotating regional seats. Although Stubb offset his lofty rhetoric about the UN with criticism of its shortcomings, he clearly geared his presentation towards the small states whose votes Finland requires. Stubb's comments, coming from a conservative politician who is Finland's most prominent advocate of NATO membership, reflect the weighty role that the U.S. has in Finnish hearts and foreign policy. End Summary.

First "a Commercial"

¶2. (U) Stubb paused at the beginning of the seminar for what he called a "commercial break" reminding the attendees that Finland is actively campaigning for a Security Council seat for the 2013-2014 term. Stubb promoted Finland as a "pair of safe hands" and a "trustworthy handshake." He showcased Finland as pro-multilateralism, with a long track record in international institutions, and good at "securing a common voice." Stubb added that small countries need to be represented in balancing the "P5 big stuff." Stubb also said that while Finland would be as active a campaigner as possible, it would not sacrifice human rights for votes. Stubb identified Australia and Luxembourg as Finland's "friendly competition". At one point Stubb turned to the Swedish Ambassador in the audience and asked, with a smile, what Finland might trade for Sweden's vote.

Looking for Strong Leadership in a World Forum

¶3. (U) With the commercial ended, Stubb asked rhetorically, "Why a strong UN?" He saw international politics at a crossroads and the international system in turmoil - and an important role for the UN in calming the turmoil. Stubb described the UN as the "linchpin" between all international institutions in a world that moved from bipolar to unipolar, and is now headed in a multipolar direction. He suggested that this multipolar world needs an overarching global organization with strong leadership potential, and that the UN is that organization.

14. (U) Stubb stressed that the UN is a world forum - a body to provide leadership and help forge a consensus on a given matter - not a world government. He sees the UN as a roof held up by the "pillars" of organizations with a global reach such as the EU and NATO, and others with regional impact, like the Nordic Council and African Union. He expressed disappointment that the UN has been unable to transform. The targets are there, he said - peace, security and human rights - but the tools are weak.

Finland is G-34  
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15. (U) As a supporter of the well-established "pillars" that should support the UN, Stubb lamented what he sees as a reliance on ad hoc fora embodied by the excessive "G activity." He joked that it did not matter whether one spoke of G-2, G-7 or G-20, because Finland would not make the list, and that if Finland did not get a seat on the UNSC, perhaps it would establish a "G-34." More seriously, Stubb said "G" multipolarity draws focus away from and marginalizes the UN, and that national solutions then pervade global problems.

Stubb's Recipe for Change  
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16. (U) Stubb said that to reach the goal of a stronger UN the international community should revisit the basic UN documents. He suggested three changes: (1) Change the Security Council to reflect the 21st century; the P5 has

HELSINKI 00000135 002 OF 002

"outlived its time" and should be replaced by regional representation (Note: He stated with a smile that he does not expect the change before the targeted Finnish Security Council term 2013-14. Other Finnish officials at the seminar broadly predicted UNSC reform during their "lifetimes." End note.); (2) Reform peacekeeping "realistically," as the blue beret or helmet is the UN's best brand and the peacekeeping system has faced unrealistic demands; and (3) Re-examine the Millennium Development Goals, which Stubb said have become a sacred cow that cannot be criticized.

Stubb's Security Council Vision  
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17. (U) Stubb suggested that if the Security Council is not radically reformed, the "relevance of the UN" will wither away. He believes that UNSC voting should be kept as simple as possible. His reformed Security Council would ideally have 8 to 10 members. A vote would require consensus, which he described as unanimity minus-1 or minus-2. Stubb proposed eliminating the veto, which he described as a larger problem than the composition of the council. In answering audience questions about council composition, Stubb said that he does not think specific regional powers would be able to monopolize control of allocated regional positions on the council. In Stubb's vision, the "pillar" organizations would carry much of the workload, leaving fewer matters to be taken up by the reformed - and presumably more efficient - UNSC.

Booster Turns Critic  
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18. (SBU) Though his presentation reflected lofty suggestions and expectations, Stubb did not shy away from criticizing the UN. In responding to questions on human rights, he said the UN is not a club of liberal democracies, that it is not a "holy organization" and that with 192 members, some are "very bad crooks." He quickly added "I don't mean the P5." He acknowledged difficulty in dealing with human rights within the UN, citing differing perspectives.

The Votes Start Coming In...

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¶9. (C) On the margins of the seminar, the Israeli DCM told PolOff that Finland agreed to vote for Israel in 2019 for Israel's vote in 2012. He said that nothing had yet been agreed to on paper.

Comment

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¶10. (C) Though Stubb seemed to pause at the outset to make his pitch for Finland's UNSC campaign, his entire presentation constituted a commercial. The engaging and savvy Stubb knows where to look for votes - the many other small states in the UN - and crafted his message accordingly. Thus, he spoke of empowering the UN while carving an important place for regional organizations (where small states may have a greater voice), as he also calls for reform that includes reducing the power of larger states within the organization. His calculated appeal to small states aside, Stubb remains a committed Atlanticist, demonstrated by the Foreign Minister of a non-NATO country identifying NATO as a main pillar holding up the "roof" of the UN. End comment.

BUTLER